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Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/RA:SEPALMERJR:PM/ISO:GTCHURCHILL:BAM
APPROVED BY NEA:SIDNEY SOBER
NEA/ARP:FMDICKMAN
DOD/ISA:JHNOYES
O/JCS:ADM. PACKER
EUR/NE:JSHUMATE
H:RFLATEN
NSC: MR. OAKLEY
CIA:DBLEE (SUB)
S/S: MR. ORTIZ
---------- 006180
O R 031603Z JUL 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T STATE 166422

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:UK, MU

SUBJECT:USE OF MASIRAH

REFS: (A) LONDON 9748, (B) TEHRAN 6438, (C) MUSCAT 779

1. WE APPRECIATE KNOWING THAT HMG PLANS TO RAISE WITH SULTAN QABOOS THE QUESTION OF A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT, WITHIN THE NEXT 3 OR 4 WEEKS, OF BRITISH INTENTION TO WITHDRAW THE RAF FROM MASIRAH (REF A). MEANWHILE, WE HAVE THE SULTAN'S FAVORABLE REACTION TO OUR PROPOSAL (REF B), AND SOME UN-
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CERTAIN INDICATIONS OF WHAT KINDS OF COSTS MIGHT BE ENTAILED

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FOR U.S. USE OF MASIRAH AFTER THE BRITISH DEPART (REF C).

2. WE ARE ASSUMING THAT SULTAN IN HIS MENTION OF "A FEW DETAILS" AND A;ZAWAWI IN HIS SUGGESTION FOR WORKING LEVEL DISCUSSIONS WERE REFERRING TO ARRANGEMENTS FOR OUR USE AFTER BRITISH DEPARTURE. WE FURTHER ASSUME THAT WAY IS NOW CLEAR FOR US TO WORK OUT WITH BRITISH ON A SERVICE-TO-SERVICE LEVEL THE TECHNICAL DETAILS OF OUR INITIAL P-3 FLIGHTS TO BE CARRIED OUT WHILE BRITISH STILL RUN MASIRAH. OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO ESTABLISH A PATTERN OF U.S. FLIGHTS WHILE BRITISH ARE IN CONTROL, AND AT THE SAME TIME TO REMAIN IN A TOLERABLE BARGAINING POSTURE FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SULTAN ON OUR POST-BRITISH USAGE.

3. IT WOULD IN OUR JUDGMENT BE TACTICALLY ADVISABLE FOR THE U.S. NAVY TO MOUNT A P-3 FAMILIARIZATION FLIGHT TO MASIRAH BEFORE HMG ANNOUNCES ITS INTENTION TO WITHDRAW THE RAF. SUCH ANNOUNCEMENT WILL DRAW SOME ATTENTION TO THE ISLAND, AND WE WOULD PREFER TO HAVE ESTABLISHED THE "ROUTINE" OF OUR USAGE BEFOREHAND.

4. FOR LONDON: ACCORDINGLY, PLEASE INFORM THE FCO THAT THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH PERTINENT BRITISH COUNTERPARTS ON OR BEFORE JULY 9 TO ARRANGE FOR THE FIRST FLIGHT ON OR BEFORE JULY 19. WE HOPE HMG IS WILLING TO DEFER ITS WITHDRAWAL ANNOUNCEMENT UNTIL AT LEAST A FEW DAYS AFTER OUR FIRST TRANSIT.

5. HMG'S ORIGINAL "FOUR QUESTIONS" ASSUMED AN INDEFINITE CONTINUATION OF THE BRITISH PRESENCE ON MASIRAH. AS WE ARE NOW TALKING ABOUT AN OVERLAP OF ONLY ABOUT NINE MONTHS, OUR RESPONSE TO "FOUR QUESTIONS" NEED ADDRESS ONLY THE USAGE WE INTEND BEFORE APRIL 1977 AS FOLLOWS:

A) TYPE OF AIRCRAFT: MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT (P-3S) - ABOUT 6 DAYS PER QUARTER, AND POSSIBLE INCLUSION OF ONE OR TWO FLIGHTS BY TRANSPORT OR LOGISTICAL AIR-CRAFT SUCH AS C-130S, ETC.

B) MISSION: MARITIME AIR PATROL AND FAMILIARIZATION,
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POSSIBLE TRANSPORT OF P-3 REPAIR COMPONENTS.

C) FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF VISITS: ABOUT 6 DAYS PER QUARTER, SOME REMAINING OVER ONE OR TWO NIGHTS.

D) GROUND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT REQUIRED: REFUELING (ABOUT 40,000 IMPERIAL GALLONS OF JET FUEL QUARTERLY) AND MINIMAL TRANSIENT SERVICES FOR CREWS NUMBERING FROM

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TWELVE TO TWENTY-THREE, ON REIMBURSABLE BASIS.

ANY FURTHER DETAILS REQUIRED WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH MILITARY CHANNELS.

6. WE WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION IF THE BRITISH WISHED TO INFORM THE SULTAN THAT WE AND THEY WERE MAKING THESE ARRANGEMENTS. OUR CHARGE IN MUSCAT WILL INFORM FONMIN ZAWAWI.

7. FOR MUSCAT: YOU MAY TELL THE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT WE ARE STUDYING THE REPORT OF YOUR JUNE 28 EXCHANGE, AND WILL BE BACK IN TOUCH IN DUE COURSE. WE HOPE TO PROVIDE LOGISTICAL SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS INFORMATION SOMETIME THIS SUMMER, BUT PERCEIVE NO NEED URGENTLY TO ENTER INTO NEGO-

TIATIONS REGARDING OUR POSSIBLE POST-APRIL 1977 USE OF MASIRAH AIRFIELD. MEANWHILE, AS THE SULTAN SUGGESTED, WE ARE PROCEEDING TO WORK OUR WITH THE BRITISH ARRANGEMENTS FOR OCCASIONAL U.S. USE OF THE AIRFIELD DURING THE NEXT NINE MONTHS.

8. FYI, WE WANT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SULTAN'S AGREEMENT THAT OUR USE OF MASIRAH BEFORE THE RAF DEPARTURE BE WORKED OUT WITH THE BRITISH. WE WANT TO AVOID CONFUSING THIS STRAIGHTFORWARD PROCEDURE WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF ANY QUID PRO QUOS FOR ANY POST-APRIL 77 USE. OUR USAGE DURING THIS PERIOD WILL BE DESIGNED TO ASSESS THE DEGREE OF USEFULNESS OF MASIRAH FOR OUR PURPOSES, AND WILL GIVE US THE INFORMATION WE NEED TO DETERMINE WHETHER, AND ON WHAT TERMS, WE WOULD WANT TO USE MASIRAH AFTER THE BRITISH LEAVE. MEANWHILE, WE SHALL BE STUDYING HOW WE COULD BE RESPONSIVE TO OMANI INTEREST IN PERTINENT INTELLIGENCE,

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IF INDEED SUCH INTEREST IS CONFIRMED LATER BY THE SULTAN. FOR TACTICAL REASONS, WE WOULD LIKE, IN ANY DISCUSSION WITH THE SULTAN OR OTHER OMANI OFFICIALS, TO REFRAIN FROM APPEARING TO PLACE HIGH VALUE ON MASIRAH. END FYI.

9. FOR BOTH ACTION ADDRESSEES: WOULD APPRECIATE REPORTS ON YOUR EXCHANGES PER THIS INSTRUCTION BY JULY 7. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, MASIRAH, MILITARY BASES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE166422
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: SEPALMERJR:PM/ISO:GTCHURCHILL:BAM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760262-1192
From: SECSTATE WASHDC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760779/aaaacrbz.tel
Line Count: 161
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 LONDON 9748, 76 TEHRAN 6438, 76 MUSCAT 779
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 OCT 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 OCT 2003 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <09 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: USE OF MASIRAH
TAGS: MARR, UK, MU, US
To: CINCPAC USCINCEUR
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006